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YUSUF MEHERALLY

THE MYSTERY OF
SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS

BY

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The Mystery of Sir Stafford Cripps
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INTRODUCTION

BY

YUSUF MEHERALLY

In the summer of 1938, I was speaking to one of the prominent leaders of the British Labour Party in London. "What", I enquired, "are the chances of Sir Stafford Cripps becoming the Prime Minister of England?"

"Sir Stafford Cripps, Prime Minister of England?", replied the Leader, "who put this idea into your head? He has no chance that I can see"

But the warmth of my enquiry set him thinking. I had met Sir Stafford Cripps and had been deeply impressed with him and so I pressed the question again.

A few minutes later he again reverted to the subject. "You asked me about Sir Stafford becoming Prime Minister. Well, it strikes me that he has not committed a single indiscretion since his indiscreet attack on the Buckingham Palace, and that was two years ago. If he continues like that for another ten years, he could perhaps go very far."

A few minutes later he again came back to the subject. "I shall tell you that Cripps will never become Prime Minister. He is too honest for the job."

"Too honest for the job"! The idea tickled me to end. What a comment it was on the working of

the British Democracy ! I reported the conversation at that time to several friends. Sir Stafford himself was quite amused when I told him about it a few days afterwards.

My admiration for Sir Stafford increased some time later when I learnt that he had taken a very heavy Trade Union case. The fees went into five figures. He won the case but refused to accept a penny by way of fees. The Trade Union was quite rich and its officials expostulated with him to reconsider his decision, but Sir Stafford firmly refused to accept any money. No wonder that his prestige went very high and even those who differed from him, and their number was not small, respected his sincerity.

In fact Sir Stafford Cripps that we knew before his present visit to India was a figure who aroused enthusiasm in this country. His name was associated with the advocacy of India's claim for freedom that Indians associated with no other name in contemporary British politics. For years he had championed her claims for self-government. The re-action in the country therefore at his latest handling of the situation was one of profound surprise and shock. If the Secretary of State for India or some other distinguished British politician had come to India and had played the Imperialist game, that would have caused little surprise. For the Indian people have learnt by travail and bitter experience to expect nothing from them. But Cripps was different. He was a personal friend of several of the principal leaders of the Indian National Congress, especially of

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. He was on the most cordial terms with several of the members of the Congress Socialist Party. During an earlier visit he was accorded a reception that was given to no British politician since the days of Lord Ripon. This time also he was overwhelmed with cordiality. In spite of his indifferent health, Mahatma Gandhi went all the way from Wardha to New Delhi in response to his invitation. The Congress Working Committee was in continuous session for the best part of two weeks at Delhi, Sir Stafford's Headquarters. Mr. Jinnah and the leaders of several political parties extended to him the same consideration, and he had a surprisingly favourable Press to start with. In a couple of weeks all had changed. The scheme that he had brought was rejected not only by the Congress and the Muslim League, but by all the other groups as well. What surprised the country so much was not the rejection of the British War Cabinet's proposals brought by Sir Stafford Cripps, but that a person of his eminence and political experience should have agreed to chaperon them and expected that India would accept them. The objections were obvious, important and numerous. The post-dated cheque, as Gandhiji aptly described them summarises one aspect of the objections. Dr. Lohia discusses them all with his usual thoroughness and originality.

The failure of his Mission evidently shocked Sir Stafford, almost as his proposals had shocked the country. His broadcast talk at the time of leaving India was unfair and unkind. His harping on the communal differences was as unexpected as it was

ungenerous, for one does not associate such conduct to a person of Sir Stafford's disposition. His latest broadcast to America, if anything, is even worse and provoked a retort from Pandit Jawaharlal that Sir Stafford was playing the Devil's Advocate.

Why did Sir Stafford Cripps act as he did when his behaviour contradicted years of devotion to the cause of India. This has appeared to many in India as one of the major mysteries of Indo-British politics. Dr. Lohia probes into these mysteries and supplies the clue with his usual brilliance.

THE MYSTERY OF SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS

CHAPTER I

The India mission of Sir Stafford Cripps is wrapped up in mystery. Knowing as he did the mind of Indian leaders from previous intimate experience, why did he agree to come out to India with proposals that he should have known were foredoomed to failure? Why did Churchill send him? There is also a strange discrepancy between what Cripps said and did up to the moment he felt there was some chance of success and his sayings and doings afterwards. Is there a reason behind this? What sort of man is Cripps?

It is not possible today to give documented answers to these questions. But the poignancy of the situation may not be as keenly felt at some distance of time as by contemporaries and it is possible today to shed light on angles that may get covered up with dusts of forgetfulness. Moreover, the basic necessity of the British State which has spouted and is using both Churchill and Cripps is already discernible and time may only add colour and details to it.

SIR STAFFORD'S SOCIALISM

What sort of man is Cripps? A single occurrence answers this question better than any other. During the Italo-Ethiopian War, Sir Stafford Cripps outlined his position as a socialist and refused to take ideas in what he said was a struggle between Italian capitalism and Ethiopian feudalism. Such an attitude is revelatory of a man's general outlook on life as also his level of education and mental maturity.

Although a socialist, Cripps showed himself up in this attitude as a European and not as a world-citizen. There are many men in Europe who, inspite of all their sincere professions of racial equality, cannot rid themselves of the white man's burden. It is part of their sub-conscious make-up. If one told them about it, they would honestly feel wronged. But they have such an illimitable faith in the attainments of European civilisation that they must needs be crusaders in the cause of Europe. They are the more modest, the less blood-and-iron and the more arguing species of imperialists. Sir Stafford Cripps is one of them.

Even so, Cripps was a socialist and he ought to have known better. Socialism, however, like any other body of doctrines, is not just one or two straight principles but a mass of interlinked ideas which sometimes cancel one another and to judge these would require mature thought and a capacity to weigh. Sir Stafford's is a simple mind. He cannot and does not wish to understand complexities. It was enough for him to know that a socialist is opposed to both feudalism and capitalism and that machine—civilisation is better than rural living and, for the moment at least, he was unaware of the other socialist principles of self-determination for nations and decentralisation in economy. Sir Stafford will undoubtedly repudiate to-day his former view of the Italo-Ethiopian war. That again has been due not so much to real understanding as to his later developed love for collective security. Sir Stafford is a man of half-a-dozen straight ideas and he does not suffer from the pale cast of sicklied thought.

LUCK IN RUSSIA

One may wonder how a simple mind could become such a strong force in British politics but one should not. Sir Stafford is in that long line of simple-minded British politicians whose last great representative was Baldwin. Of tolerably good parentage and extremely successful in their own trade or profession, these men possess one great quality, the knack to back the right horse. Sir Stafford backed Russia in time. He did not bring about the Russo-German war, he was at Stalin's court when the war broke out. He got the laurels. He became a force. With another run of luck, he would have become the most powerful individual in England but, here, his simplicity of mind stood in the way.

CRIPPS' SOMERSAULTS IN INDIA

Sir Stafford attempted to back India. The horse was a loser. But why should he have tried to swop horses midstream, why should he have sung praises and later cavilled and carped? There is no doubt that, during his first ten days in India, Sir Stafford talked business with Congressmen and exchanged pleasantries with the rest. His way of talking business was suave and convincing like a travelling salesman's. We have it on the authority of Maulana Azad that Cripps had agreed to reduce the Viceroy to the position of the British King. During the last five days, his mood changed entirely. He almost told the purchasers to look at the catalogue where everything had been listed and not to worry him about any oral explanations he did not remember having given. His abuse of the Congress was clear and definite; he got out of a diffi-

culty by telling the untruth that Congress was asking power for the Hindus.

SUGGESTED EXPLANATION

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru has a theory to explain this glaring irrationality of conduct. Jawaharlalji thinks, at least thought on the morrow of the Cripps' failure, that Delhi and Whitehall diehards were frightened at the exceedingly alluring promises which Cripps was making to Indian nationalism and, being his superiors, they pulled Sir Stafford up. This may be true but there is one big drawback in this theory as an explanation of Sir Stafford's conduct. It gives all the power and, therefore, all the blame to the Cabinet in London and the Viceroy in India and reduces Sir Stafford Cripps to being a robot. Sir Stafford is, indeed, part-robot but he is also part-advocate. He advocated the old imperialist plea of communal differences in India rather too well to be a machine. And, if it is suggested that a false sense of loyalty to his country and colleagues impelled Sir Stafford to defame the Indian National Congress at the moment, more than three months have since elapsed and he could have atoned. Even if he would not speak, he could at least have resigned his cabinet post. He is instead attempting to lead the British offensive against Indian nationalism. It is obvious that any theory to explain his strange behaviour must take into account the workings of his own mind and not merely those of his colleagues and superiors.

Another explanation has been attempted. With the progress of his conversations, Sir Stafford is said to have felt the deadening influence of non-violence upon Congress leaders and their desire, under certain

conditions, to make peace with Japan. Cripps himself appears to give this theory his sanction. Apart from the fact that adherence to non-violence and a peace of surrender with aggressors go ill together, there is hardly any doubt that Congress leaders are the least willing in the world to sacrifice idealism to opportunist considerations. That may be due to their being in the opposition; they too may change after they have power. But their present state of mind is indisputably clear and Sir Stafford could not possibly have misread it; they would not seek peace with aggressors. Moreover to suggest that the principle of non-violence stood in any way between Sir Stafford and the Congress Working Committee is to fly in the face of facts. Anybody who studies its resolutions and the utterances of its spokesmen must admit that the Working Committee has in recent months shied from non-violence like an unbroken colt. At times, its pleadings have been so woefully pathetic as if non-violence were a crime. Sir Stafford could not possibly have been so deaf and, shall I add dumb. That Mahatma Gandhi might have insisted with Cripps on the efficacy of non-violence could not have brought about a change in his attitude. He knew of Gandhiji's position before he had embarked on his sugared salesman's talk and his later culminations must, therefore, have their reason elsewhere.

IS THERE REALLY A MYSTERY ?

Mystery is often created by missing the obvious. Between the two dissimilar attitudes of Cripps, there was the intervention of the American Johnson. Sir Stafford resented it and he even made chagrined references to it. This was natural. Open American in-

tervention in imperial affairs would touch an Englishman on the raw same as an old man would feel when power started slipping from his hands into those of a viriler set. Aside from being nationally susceptible, Sir Stafford was personally sensitive. After Johnson's intervention, the mission had lost half its charm for Cripps. Even if he had succeeded, he could not have gathered all the plums. The plot was developing into a two-heroes business. Sir Stafford was both nationally and personally piqued. Even this would not be an entire explanation. His abuses were too strong for a pique. There was some keener disappointment. Moreover, his mission was failing even before America's representative intervened; there was something in this failure itself that caused his bitterness.

THE PREMIER DREAMS

I suggest that the irrationality of Sir Stafford can have only one explanation. This lies in the difference between a dream and a nightmare. While Sir Stafford dreamt, he talked suavely; when the nightmare came, he slightly lost his mental balance. He saw the premiership of the British empire running away. He had hoped to succeed in his mission in India and that he argued, would raise the stock of British radicals and displace the conservative Prime Minister of England. In the failure of his mission, he saw his hopes dashed and there was bitter disappointment and ashy frustration. What is today reasoning by a process of elimination may receive full corroboration, at a not distant date, in the memoirs of the negotiating leaders. It is just possible that Cripps talked about his hopes to Indian leaders, infact, used them as a persuasion.

Would not better days lie in store for Indian nationalism with a progressive Prime Minister, could not Cripps have said this ?

This theory is apparently derogatory of Sir Stafford, but not really so, at least, not very much so. At the time that Cripps might have been betraying the trust of his colleagues in India, he perhaps felt that Churchill was behaving likewise, for double-crossing is a frequent practice among realistic colleagues. Again, it will be a half-truth to say that Cripps was inspired by considerations of personal power alone. Power-politics and national politics are inextricably mixed up. In the mind of some very honest politicians, particularly those who do not believe so much in ideas as in the personal touch, resides the gnawing thought that, if only they were at the head, things would go roaringly well. Cripps wanted to be Prime Minister not only for his own sake but for that of England, the British Empire, infact, the whole world. He felt that he had the capacity in him which Churchill obviously does not possess, to breathe progressive activity in the administration of England. He was in dead earnest about succeeding in India so as to gain in prestige and influence and to be Prime Minister and, with the vastly added power, to manage things better in the British Empire. It was a dream of spiral ascent, where Cripps and the Empire were, in the mind of Sir Stafford, synonymous.

WHY THEN DID HE COME TO INDIA?

We are now brought to the question of what made Sir Stafford come out to India. It was his indifference to ideas and definite formulations, belief in the per-

sonal touch and habit of evolutionary progress. Politicians in free and prosperous countries may talk loose radicalism while in opposition but they also form the habit of alternately walking in and out of the government. Progress is to them more an amorphous movement onwards than a definite and well-formulated advance. They become evolutionary by habit, although they may exhibit occasional radicalism in speeches, and their conception of political improvement is to a large extent change in administrative personnel. Sir Stafford had guessed that Indian leaders would be as wise as he and, human nature being the same all over, would react similarly. That is why, although he may have expected the disapproval of Congress leaders to the formulation of British proposals, he believed that an amorphous talk about revolutionary possibilities and a concrete vision of change in government personnel would finally bring them round. He had not the maturity of experience to see that India was neither free nor prosperous and her nationalist politicians, with the possible exception of Rajagopalachariar, were built on a different pattern. Sri Rajagopalachariar is perhaps the only grand manner politician in India who has the unobjectivity of a free people and the nonchalance of a rich country. The great Congress leaders, however, are generally objective enough to realise that, until foreign rule is ended, they have little capacity for all else. They are, therefore, hesitant about mere administrative changes. They desire a revolutionary infusion of strength in their people; for unsupported by it, they feel helpless even in seats of authority. They have not the ethical realness of spirit to forget that their country is neither

free nor prosperous and they, therefore, demand a definite break from the past, in thought as well as in action. Moreover, it is just possible that the Indian mind is not as capable of vague ideas as the British mind is; it is more thoughtful and less personal. In any case, the tragedy of Sir Stafford lay in the possession of a simple honest imperialist mind which is incapable of grasping that men's habits are different and they clash fearfully and, when they do so, bitterness is the outcome.

WHY DID CHURCHILL SEND HIM?

Was Churchill astute enough to foresee all this when he sent Cripps out? That would perhaps be overemphasising his ego and underrating his statecraft. He might indeed have been anxious to show an upstart rival his place but other springs of action appear to have been more dominant. There was some necessity of the British State which drove Churchill to accept the Cripps mission. In vulgar terms, it was the pressure of nationalist opposition in India and its reflection in the pressure of public opinion in England and among the Allies especially in China and America. These pressures, to make sense, must be studied in relation to the basic necessity of the British State.

ENGLAND'S NECESSITY TO MAINTAIN THE EMPIRE

The Empire is England's necessity. Economic and geo-political factors compel England to continue maintaining a far-flung Empire. Glamour and traditional usages and needs of the ruling class have added the weight of the spirit and of history to this co

so that the Empire is today the basis of existence of the British State. Without an Empire, the present population of England cannot be maintained, not even at levels of living lower than the existing ones. The best-planned socialist commonwealth in Britain cannot meet this pressure without the riches of an Empire. The existing British State which has peopled the little island to fantastic proportions must either break or hold on to the Empire. Moreover, the apparatus of sea-power was admirably suited to policing the extensive empire of an island which had neither the strength nor the misfortune to seek for near and contiguous expansion on land. This geo-political apparatus and the industrial machine have made of the British State essentially the British Empire. What will the factory-worker together with his exploiting master, the trader, the administrator, the seaman and, above all, the book-writer and the political gentry do without an Empire? To all these the Empire is as the blood in their veins. The ruling class in England realises this. Present-day England is coeval with the Empire. To save Britain and to save the Empire are interchangeable terms. This is no mere jingling of jingo bells. It is the life-cry of the existing British State. Churchill has the lustiest cry of all English children and he is also the supreme exponent, in speech and in action, of the imperial necessity of the British State.

THE NAVY CAN'T DO IT

England's geo-political situation, which gave her until recently an admirably same navy-controlled empire, is now a source of great weakness to her. What

distinguishes our century from its predecessor is the remarkable intensity with which political awakening, before confined to Europe, is spreading over all the world. The slaves are up. It is easy enough to police a whole continent of sleeping men with an efficient little navy but, when they have bestirred themselves into activity, numbers count. Hundreds of millions of men can no longer be ruled from the coastlines or from a distance of thousands of miles. The nineteenth was the century of ports and harbours and therefore of the navy; the twentieth is the century of the hinterland and, therefore, of huge land forces which obviously include the air arm. England has an intensely rebellious hinterland in her Empire, her navy is no longer up to it, and she is faced with far vaster land forces of her imperial rivals. She is outnumbered by external foes and is internally threatened by rebellious subject-populations. Her need therefore is, firstly, to appease her freedom demanding subjects and secondly to develop alliances with powers of great land forces.

Cripps' India Mission was an expression of this need. It would be a market-place half-truth to regard the mission as a concession made by Churchill to unwelcome American or Chinese pressure or to clamourings among—his own people. These pressures and clamourings are only an outward symptom of what goes far deeper down. If Churchill at all made a concession, it was to this deep-down imperious need of the State to appease a rebellious subject-nation at a time when its geo-political situation had deteriorated, when its chief instrument of armed might, the navy, was no

longer able to hold its own against the huge armed quantities of other land-Powers.

THEREFORE APPEASEMENT

There are two needs of the British State, to hold on to the Empire as also to appease rebelling populations. These two needs are in no wise contradictory of each other. They may only appear at times to pursue divergent paths. In the ultimate analysis, these two needs are related to one another like a mother to her suckling child, for where is the need to appease a subject-nation if there is to be no empire. The process of appeasement must definitely fall short of the end of the empire. If a subject-nation cannot be satisfied with anything less than the destruction of all foreign rule, the basic need of an imperialist State to hold on to the empire at all costs must assert itself. Concessions to a revolting population are only a device to save an empire, when it is in distress. Churchill and Cripps do not differ in their desire to continue the empire; they differ in their emphasis.

BUT WITHIN LIMITS

A State never commits intentioned suicide. To pursue the similitude, it is either killed by outside assassins or withers, disrupts and dies through internal decay. Statesmen may differ in their opinion about what is necessary to restore the health of the State and to strengthen it; they are united in obeying the mandate of its basic need. The basic need of the British State is the British Empire. When Mahatma Gandhi wants British statesmen to give up their empire, this is perhaps expecting too much of a set of people whose free will in politics is rather limited. The significance,

however, of Gandhiji's wish lies not so much in its content as in the procedure envisaged. An opponent must in every event be appealed to do the right thing, even if he is obviously incapable of it. This gives greater assurance to one's own forces, pleases the neutrals and discomfits the opponent's ranks. Such appeals, however, are sometimes misused. There is always a tendency in a revolting population to be appeased with something less than its entire objective. Cripps' India Mission should have proved, if proof were still needed, that an imperial state never willingly and wholly gives up its Empire; it only loses its possessions to stronger forces. This elementary observation is, however, beyond the grasp of some. To them, Mahatma Gandhi's appeals are a God-sent. They tone down the appeals and continue to wait upon the pleasure of His Majesty's Government for another edition of the Cripps' Mission.

A statesman usually carries many strings to his bow. In the event of one snapping, he is always ready to make use of the second or the third string. As Cripps failed in his appeasement policy, he harped on the communal differences in India. Divide and rule is a permanent string of imperialist policy. It serves two ends. It is a propaganda device to seek self-justification, to trap neutrals and to confound the rebelling population. It is also an administrative device to create barriers and to break the will of a revolting nation into several mutually conflicting desires. The obverse of Cripps the appeaser was Cripps the divider and that he played his old imperialist part only too well was due to an over-dose of personal frustration and bitterness.

CHAPTER II

BRITISH DECLARATION

The Draft Declaration of the British Cabinet issued by Sir Stafford Cripps on March 29, 1942, has been described by an Oxford Professor as the Declaration of Indian Independence. No State in history has to-date liquidated its territories unless forced to do so by a foreign conqueror or internally successful revolutionaries. It is indeed true that the British State in India has for some time past been faced with either threat. However at the time the British made their Declaration of India neither of the threats had eventuated. There was no inescapable compulsion. It was at best a case of prudent foresight, an attempt to forestall events. But no State has ever acted to the point of liquidating a part of itself, and a vital part at that, before a threat has actually become a compulsion. Such foresight is unknown. It presumes too much. It posits a serenity of prophetic wisdom, which is not given to shrinking States. If the British Draft was nevertheless a Declaration of Indian Independence, Britain has opened a refreshingly new chapter in the history of political practice.

Refreshing originality is only possible to individuals and revolting groups and, possibly also, to a newly awakened people and their State. The past weighs too heavily on a State whose continued existence over many years has driven it into an accustomed routine. Such a State has its numerous institutions and their personnel and, what is least changeable of all, the devices it has perfected for its rule. These devices are

designed to secure the State against foreign invasion and internal rebellion. No State which has had time to perfect its devices of rule can ever completely get rid of them. Its statesmen may, in a moment of pressing necessity or hopeful idealism, see visions of a new world in the future but their current action, like the fluttering of a caged bird, is limited by their existing practices. The past dominates the present in such States and the future, at its best, is a blurred and indeterminate vision. At all events, even the blurred visions of a better future in such a State are severely unrelated to the rigid devices of a present that is only a continuation of the past.

FUTURE FREEDOM ASSURED?

The British Declaration contemplated a future for India. It sought to make this future pleasant. It talked of a treaty between India and Britain which would "cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands." This description is not equivocal. It seemed to go to the root of the conflict between India and Britain. It foresaw an India, not long after cessation of hostilities, which is completely freed from British control. The future is pleasant and there does not appear to be any blurring of outlines. Lest there may be any doubt, it is made clear that the Indian Union will be "in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic and external affairs."

There was indeed ample ground for a proud Indian to feel hurt that his Union "shall constitute a Dominion associated with the United Kingdom and other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown."

But a Declaration made in good-will and not as a result of defeat could not be otherwise. Moreover, the Indian Union was given power "to decide in future its relationship" with the British Empire. Once it was formed, the Indian Union, as Cripps said, would be free to disown the Crown and act like Canada which "can join the U.S.A. tomorrow if it wants to." Such tomorrows, indeed never come and, even if they do, they take decades in arriving. A right admitted is not automatically a right exercised. And the right of separation which has been generously granted by a superior Power to a weaker nation is seldom exercised. Only when a nation, at the end of a successful struggle, wrests rights from its erstwhile rulers does it choose to exercise them.

The economic relationship of India to Britain in the future was modelled more or less on the same lines as the political relationship. Cripps said, "we are not going to make any condition in the Treaty as regards guaranteeing the vested rights of British interests in India" and in respect of expropriation measures he suggested "the Union will be free to take all measures which are open to a sovereign State to take." This was perhaps the most refreshing feature of the Cripps Mission. The British commercial interests in India have ever been a thorn in our flesh. They have always been put up as a minority interest to thwart our economic and political advance. For the first time perhaps have the British made, what is of course only a theoretic admission, that British capital and trade are no tone of India's numerous minorities and that they need not be guaranteed. A theoretic admission, how-

ever, is not necessarily a practical reality. An Indian Union, which is created through the generous assistance of Britain, will, out of oriental gratefulness, refuse to expropriate British interests and, even if it chooses to do so, will not have the necessary strength and international backing to deny compensation. Incidentally, it does not need to be argued that most British interests in India do not deserve compensation.

JURISTIC, NOT REAL FREEDOM

The future Indian Union, as contemplated in the British Declaration, was juristically free from British political and economic control. That this juristic freedom might not have been real freedom is inherent in all declarations of independence made by a ruler to the ruled. Old ties either snap suddenly or take wearisome long in loosening. That depends on whether the erstwhile ruled have themselves drafted their own Declaration of Independence or whether their rulers have drafted it for them. The British Declaration offered India the right to be free economically and politically, and that this right may have taken long in exercising is inherent in all political action where grant and not power have been the motivating forces. No proud people, which is in a hurry to do things, ever accepts declarations from others. The British Declaration granted India the right to be free in fairly clear terms. Apart from the fact that the right to be free is not necessarily the actual exercise of freedom. It is also of deciding importance to discover as to whom the British Declaration granted this right. Who was to be the inheritor of British authority in India? This

question would have been unnecessary, had the British declaration talked of India as a single country with comparatively uniform institutions. The Indian people would then have been the inheritors of British authority. How they chose to exercise that authority and what organic institutions they built for themselves would then have been left entirely to the decision of the Indian people. But the British declaration talks dubiously of India and even this tremendously elementary concept of what is India appears to have more than one meaning. The right to be free is not worth much if it is not clear as to who is to be free.

BALKANISATION OF INDIA

The British Declaration draws two pictures of the future in India, in fact of future India herself. One picture is of India, whole and united. Another is of India split up into several countries. Amidst such confusion even the great fact of India which has endured for centuries seems to vanish away and its place is taken up by manifold speculations and possibilities. The British Declaration has made of India a speculation. The right to be free was granted not to an existing reality but to a speculative fiction.

It is indeed true that the emphasis in the British Declaration appears to rest on a United India "the object is the creation of a new Indian Union" declares the British Draft. It is not several Indias but one India that is truly contemplated. Should this India come into being, and this appears to have been the object of the British draft, there would be no further difficulty about the devolution of power. But the British objective, almost as soon as it was stated, was

subjected to various modifying and altering clauses. India is split up into four Indias. There is the India of any such British Indian Province which chooses "to retain its present constitutional position," the India of such non-acceding provinces which decide to form a Union of their own, the India of Indian States which may not elect to adhere to the Constitution and finally the dismembered rest of India to form the Indian Union. These were indeed merely possibilities. The British Draft did not view them as certainties. But doubts and uncertainties are great dissolvers of institutions. And here the very existence of a country was doubted. That not all the four Indias appear to be likely events and that some of the doubts are rather remote is no answer to the charge that the base on which all else rests in India, the country itself, was assailed by uncertainties. This cannot but cause an agonising feeling to any one who believes in the destiny of India.

INDIAN STATES

The India of the Indian States was the least remote of the doubts raised in the British Draft. The status quo in the Indian States which is entirely outmoded by the progress of events and whose chief sanction is the British bayonet was guaranteed. The few hundreds rulers of Indian States were given the right to sit in the Constitution-making body as if they were hundred million people. After their nominated representatives had taken part in the deliberations of the proposed Indian Union, they were also free to walk out of it. They were given the right to enter into separate treaties with the British Government in

London. Such treaties would necessarily have related to Foreign Policy and Defence. The British Empire had thus reserved to itself the right, in the event that the Princes were willing and they are always willing, to station its troops in several parts of India and move them from one place to another and also to direct the foreign policy of one fourth of our population. The proposed Indian Union would probably have had to guarantee the passage of British troops through its own territories, on roads, rivers and railways, in the event that an Indian State made a request for them. Moreover, the internal pattern of living in Indian States and their institutions of political conduct would probably have been very dissimilar from those in the proposed Indian Union; there would have been arbitrary rule, however diluted, functioning alongside of democracy. Apart from the possibility of intrigues in the interest of reaction, this would probably have caused serious friction between different parts of India and invited foreign intervention. Whenever the British so chose, they would have been in a position to intimidate the proposed Indian Union through the instrument of the Indian States; it would have been the affirmation in form and denial in substance the right of India to be free.

SECEDING PROVINCES

If the Indian States were the least remote of freedom's enemies in the British Draft, the non-adhering provinces that were given the right to form a Union of their own would have been potentially the most dangerous. The difficulties of intrigue and friction and likely foreign intervention and guaranteed pass-

pect of united working among the dominant parties in the country, once the national government were allowed to be formed, and that would probably have softened the Muslim League and made it alter out of shape its demand for separation. As against this probability of one Indian Union comprising all the British provinces of India, it must be admitted that the idea of the country's dismemberment has for the first time been given a place, although not a very envious one, in a constitutional draft of authority. There is a possibility that this may feed the agitation for separation. The history of any agitation is the story of growth on successively broadening levels of partial victories or partial suppressions. The British acceptance, however niggardly, of the idea of India's dismemberment as already been seized upon by disrup-

tionists as a victory. Their agitation has reached a level broader than the preceding, when the British had not yet made their declaration. The British draft is already and, in certain circumstances, may far more be one of the many causes that will perhaps produce civil strife in India.

PRETEXTS FOR THE POLICY

Why did the British government have to admit the possibility of States and Provinces non-adhering and to give them the right, under certain conditions, to break India into pieces? There is first the plighted-word theory and the British distaste, so it is said, for breach of promise. What contracts they would have violated, if they had not given the non-adherence right to provinces, is hard to discover. The pledge in the British draft that the Treaty between India and Britain "will make provision, in accordance with undertakings given by His Majesty's Government for the protection of racial and religious minorities" was more than adequate. As far as the treaties with Indian States are concerned, they are so obsolete that not to scrap them would show a dishonourable collusion between two contracting partners. In fact, these are not treaties but the command of a superior to an inferior and the bowing and scraping and benignity that follow. In regard to the possible dismemberment of India accepted in the British draft, the plighted word theory is almost entirely a pretext.

There is then the theory of dissenters' revolt. It shall not be merely a rhetorical answer, but one in which the desire and strength of State-building is embedded, if National India were to suggest that dissenters' revolts were Free India's business and not

that of the evacuated British. This, however, would not be an academic answer. But then no fool-proof academic enquiry is possible. Much will depend on that intangible and unforeseeable quantity, the temper of the people, when the British have left. It is indeed true that the Princes and a section of Muslims have now and then threatened dire consequences upon a Free and United India. These threats have produced a certain fear atmosphere. What part of this fear atmosphere is genuine, it is difficult to say; one part, at least, is something on which foreign rule thrives and its supporters fatten. If the second part is more deciding than the first, Free India need have no fear of dissenters' revolts. It is of course true that Muslim separateness from Indian nationalism, whatever its present assistance to foreign rule, has also some genuine foundation. Even so, Free India alone can give an answer, whether in dismemberment or in coercion or, what is most likely, in an amicable settlement. The longer this answer is delayed, the greater becomes the separateness of identity of the various communities in the country. In any case, Muslim fears could more properly have been treated in that part of the Draft which related to the present settlement; to have incorporated them in the picture of Future India was either a grave error of the British or their traditional devices of rule.

The British Draft contains many and divergent outlines of Future India. It is like a bad and blurred photograph. Was the landscape unsteady or the hand of the photographer shaky? Did his hand tremble on set intent or due to infirmity? Curiously enough, the answer is in the affirmative to all these questions.

All the factors were probably operative at the time the photograph was taken.

ANALYSIS OF BRITISH INTENTIONS

This brings us to the question of British intentions towards India. British statesmen, preeminently Sir Stafford Cripps, regard the demonstration of their sincerity as the greatest success of the British draft. On the face of it, this claim is unfounded; for the right to be free was offered to an indeterminate India which was still in the lap of the gods and nobody could tell what exercise would be made of this right. Nevertheless, the British can argue that they had made up their minds that India should be free. True enough, but they had also made up their minds, or would make them up when the time came, for several other things. There are several British intentions towards India, not one. It cannot be otherwise. Even individuals own a whole ladder of resolves, in fact, several ladders placed side by side. In their loves and hates and money-making and power-pursuit and the rest, they possess a whole scala of objectives and, if at the moment they appear to be going up one ladder, let there be an interference, they will jump on to the next and yet another one that have been placed alongside. All men do this; the only difference between a good man and a bad man lies in dignity and being true to oneself.

Sir Stafford Cripps should be the first to admit that a multiplicity of intentions is to be found most in a statesman and, still more so, in a cabinet of statesmen. Leaving aside sordid issues of personal power of which most statesmen are in small or large measure victims, their opinions on general issues are in a fluid state and

they have got to be so. Take Sir Stafford himself. Let us presume that he wants India to be free. What then? He wants India to be part of a World Federation, if that is not possible, to be under the British Crown, if that is not possible, to enjoy unhindered sovereignty. He would like India to develop her own industries but he would also want his own people to live in comfort, world trade to increase and national tariffs to be held in check and obstructive British interests in India to be conciliated with concessions that he considers legitimate. He perhaps likes India to develop uniformly democratic institutions but, in the light of what he considers practical realities, he would want the country to put up for a few more years with the arbitrary rule of the princes. This is all, presuming Sir Stafford is pure as snow, but no man can make that claim. Let us now take Mr. Amery and Mr. Churchill. They probably have the same wants as Sir Stafford; only what is third-stage with him is first-stage with them. Mr. Eden is perhaps half-way between the two types. The Draft Declaration of the British Cabinet was a compromise of all these desires and the varying intensity with which they are held. That is why provision is made in the British Draft for a whole fleet of ladders of resolves placed alongside of each other. If the British seem to be going up the ladder of one Indian Union at the moment, there is no guarantee that, with some interference and under changed conditions, they may not jump off to the ladders of princely or disruptionists' India. These then will be the levers whereby, in all sincerity and honour to the pledged word, they will force unsavoury compromises upon Future India.

A State has no intentions ; it knows only action and shows tendencies. That is why the intentions of a statesman are fluid and changing. The action of the British State in respect of India has been and continues to be to dominate her ; there is, in addition, one tendency, among many others, to appease in a measure the Indian desire for freedom. The other tendencies of the British State are past-controlled and serve its need of existence. Almost throughout the nineteenth century the Indian States were perfected as the shock-absorbers of the wars and revolts of India against Britain and their function continues. During the four decades of the twentieth century, the Indian Muslims were sought to be used as a broad social base for British rule against the rising tide of Indian freedom and unity and British efforts have to an extent succeeded. The use of the Indian States and of minorities is therefore the traditional device of rule of the British. Political devices and instruments tend to acquire, through long use, a life of their own. Even if the British so chose, they could not entirely escape them. And why should they choose to do so. The law of existence forbids them to deny themselves the use of these instruments. The hand of the photographer had shaken on set intent as also through compulsion. In its draft declaration, the British state has unmistakably shown two divergent tendencies of approach to India, Free India as also Unfree India, United India and Disrupted Indias. When the recipient itself was unknown, what was the grant of freedom worth? Moreover, this freedom could any day be curtailed if not in law, then through the use of traditional devices of British rule. It would have been a case very much worse than that

of Egypt. Britain and Egypt were in their last treaty given equality of opportunities in the matter of flying over each other's territories, but this was only juristic equality. In actual practice, Egypt had then only forty aeroplanes to Britain's four thousand and she had no possibilities of increasing her air-arm of which Britain has shown herself so rich. India's juristic freedom would have been much worse; it would not only have been limited by her internal resources or civil strife but also subject to the vagaries of any future British statesmen who chose to pursue the regressive trend of the British draft.

WHAT OF THE PRESENT?

If the future of India as contemplated in the British draft was to this extent past-dominated, what of the present? It should be very much more so and it is. If the progressive trend appears to be more pronounced than the regressive in that part of the British Draft which related to the future, it is the other way about in what was the present settlement. This is in the fitness of things. Statesmen are not so much concerned about the future as with the tendencies of the present and they arrange these in some sort of an order of preference. The present settlement in the British draft was not likely to further the progressive trend.

DEFENCE OF INDIA

The current arrangements envisaged in the British draft were so briefly sketched out that they were vague. They related principally to the defence of India and the character of the government that was to be and the British meaning was made clear only as

the negotiations progressed. In respect of defence, the draft said that the British government "must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain the control and direction of the Defence of India as part of their world war effort but the task of organising to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the co-operation of the peoples of India." This enunciation may do credit to a foreign minister who is arguing the case of his country against another but does not wish to see war between the two. As a clause in a working treaty, it is thoroughly pious and slippery except in one point, the retention of the control and direction of Indian defence in British hands.

As negotiations progressed, the British government tried to put a little more concreteness in its proposals for defence. Indian defence was thenceforth to be the responsibility of two departments, the War department under the British commander-in-chief and the defence department under a representative Indian. Two attempts were made by Sir Stafford to define the functions of the two departments. The earlier attempt sought to give an exhaustive list of the powers and responsibilities of the defence department. Thirteen items were listed. Two of these were rather amusing work, the supply of tea and bread and beer and, possibly, stiffer drinks to troops and the knitting of woollens for our brave soldiers, for the lists said, "all canteen organisations" and "amenities for, and welfare of troops and their dependents, including Indian soldiers abroad" and it must have been a momentary lapse of Sir Stafford that made him forget the rather highly entertaining item of dances and cabarets and

songstresses for troops. It was of course not all fun; there was work too. Perhaps the most important and, also the most exacting, work of defence department lay in five directions; the denial policy, the policy of evacuation from threatened areas, economic warfare, public relations and, of course, demobilisation. Indians had asked for strenuous duties and they had now no reason to complain. The "representative Indian" was to be given all the unpleasant business of a war, superintending over the miseries that the war is causing to his people without, of course, having anything to do with the waging of it and the broader policies and, by jingo, he was also to explain to his countrymen as the public relations chief why he was harassing them. The remaining six items were midway between light amusing work, Sir Stafford knits too by way of distraction, and powerless but onerous responsibilities. All told, the Indian Defence Member would have had several faces, a merry spinster, a jolly hotelier, a diplomatist commercial traveller, a stationer washing his hands in invisible soap, a harassed accountant and, above all, a demon of destruction without the power to heal.

When the Working Committee showed its lack of humour by rejecting this proposal, Sir Stafford made yet another effort. This time, he defined the functions of the War department. The British War Member would have been responsible for the governmental relations of General Headquarters, Navy Headquarters and Air Headquarters which included as item number one, "examining and sanctioning all proposals emanating from G.H.Q. and A.H.Q." Any further description was entirely superfluous but a State document

must, I believe, carry more than one item and so three more heads were added. To enquiries as to what the governmental relations and proposals of the various Headquarters specifically meant, Sir Stafford turned an amazed eye. Why did men ask about the obvious; it is such a nasty habit with some and a source of deep embarrassment. The War Department was to be the War department, that was all.

Whatever chinks in the armour of the British Empire in India might still have been left and, who knows what clever Indian might have attempted to abrogate to himself powers under the plea of "organising to the full" India's military and other resources, were removed by the late revelation that the Government of India would consist of the Viceroy and his executive council answerable to him. The army is the chief obvious instrument of a foreign authority; there is no subtlety about it as about the other devices of foreign rule and it is therefore never transferred, unless after defeat, to popular control. In reserving to itself the responsibility for and control over the Indian army, and the present settlement in the British draft was perfectly clear on this point, the British government behaved to pattern. The natural tendency of the British State to retain India as a possession was here in full, immediate and undisguised operation.

ARMY IS EMPIRE

Sir Stafford does not waste too many words over this tendency. His observation to the Indian National Congress is voluminously laconic: "this defence is, as you know, a paramount duty and responsibility of His Majesty's Government, while unity of Command is

essential in the interests of the Allied help to India." The Working Committee was salutingly importunate in asking accommodation for the Indian Defence Member alongside of the British War Member; a quarter-berth would have done. I hope this will not happen again. The Working Committee was agreed to leave the entire operational activity of the war to the British and, in regard to general policy-framing, was profuse in its assurances to Sir Stafford that its determination to wage war on the Axis was keener than his. But the British Cabinet was adamant. It wanted all the concerns of the Indian army for itself; operational activity, organisational control and policy-framing. To have surrendered in the immediate present any one of these three items would have meant that the British Cabinet had wholeheartedly accepted, at any rate, the idea of liquidating the empire in India. Cabinets seldom accept an idea wholeheartedly and their wholehearted execution of it is still more seldom.

Aside from the obvious desire to retain the Indian empire, there were perhaps other background reasons for the British refusal to surrender in the immediate present any vital concerns of the Indian army. Sir Stafford appears to hint at one. In the interests of the Allied help to India, he wanted unity of command. It is difficult to understand why, if the Allied help to India is disinterested and in furtherance of democracy, the Allied should insist on a British War Member. Was a return expected for help given? Moreover, there appears to have been some distrust in the British mind about what an Indian War Member might not do even in the midst of the war; his gov-

ernment might choose to follow a policy divergent from that of the Allies.

THE INDIA GOVERNMENT

The character of the war-government proposed by the British government was not clear at the outset. The British draft spoke of "the immediate and effective participation" of Indian leaders in the counsels of their country and elsewhere. This is a rather loose description almost surely deliberate. It may indicate either a norm unilaterally accepted by the British government or a quasi-legal arrangement between two parties. Sir Stafford's earlier effusions about the Indian Cabinet and the National Government that would have been immediately formed strengthened the view that the arrangement between India and Britain was to be legal, at any rate, quasi-legal. But then this cheerful presaging of a break for India was made at homely chats with our leaders and pressmen; it was only meant to create an atmosphere. There was nothing legal about it. The Indian climate, however, is no longer suitable for confidence—men or, if that is too harsh an expression, for charmers of the phrase. Sir Stafford discovered this rather late. But he had nothing to offer except norms and wishes. The legal arrangements were to continue unaltered. The Government of India was to be, as before, the Viceroy and a Council answerable to him. The council would have had no status, legal or otherwise, except what the British representative chose to give it in the background of the normative atmosphere which the draft and Sir Stafford had attempted to create. The only sanction of the council would have been resignation, a fact

which Sir Stafford emphasised overmuch. Well could Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru say, "that is not the way to bring about a settlement."

The relationship between any two countries can be studied best in the tendency of State—behaviour towards one another that is uppermost in the immediate present. The Indian State, if it can at all be so called, was to be a branch of the British State, wholly so in legal status and, to a considerable extent, in actual substance. The British draft had tried to veil this relationship with a dubious expression, Sir Stafford in his earlier utterances had tried to phrase it away altogether and it was only when the Congress insisted that the veil was lifted and the powder-and-paint removed. The prolongation of the Congress-Cripps negotiations over two weeks had its reason not only in the Congress representatives' rather keen desire for a settlement but also in the reluctance with which Cripps agreed to descend from the atmosphere on to solid ground, British statesmen, as any other, can be ingratiating sellers of rotten ware.

WHY NO IMMEDIATE TRANSFER OF POWER

Explanations have been offered. The reason why the British Government could not alter the already existing character of the government in India was supposed to have been the impossibility of constitutional changes in the midst of a war. It was well suggested by the Congress President that such an organic law of the most revolutionary character as the Anglo-French Union was proposed by the British cabinet in the midst of a war. In fact, the basic outlines of some of the most enduring or novel constitutions,

as in the freedom-seeking United States, Revolutionary France or Spain of the Republic, have been hammered out in the midst of strife and war. Moreover, the Congress was even prepared to wait for a constitutional revision till the end of the war; it would have been content with a convention establishing responsibility to the legislature or the right of the Cabinet to take decisions without interference.

The British answer to the demand for a convention, in the absence of a constitutional law, was that it would introduce an irremovable dictatorship and that the minorities would not accept it. The British are a rather absent-minded people; they can be quite whimsical and unconventional when it suits them but expect others to conform to the strictest legal form. It would have been absolutely no dictatorship and nothing irremovable, if for the year or two that the war may still continue, the British had offered unhindered powers to a composite cabinet of principal Indian leaders, preeminently those of the Congress and of the Muslim League. Whatever may be said about the form, a responsible democracy would have come into operation in substance. The danger from such composite cabinets is not one of dictatorship; it lies in over-much attention to democratic forms at the expense of the democratic effort.

It is difficult to see why the minorities in the country should have denied such composite cabinets the right to take decisions without interference. And yet Mr. Jinnah of the Muslim League said that if the Congress demand were accepted, the Muslims would be "at the mercy of the Congress rule." This is a bewildering

observation. There are only two cogent explanations for it. This observation was made three days after the break-down of the Congress-Cripps negotiations, when the British were looking out for an argument to sustain them, and the Muslim League, which exists in a mutually obliging relationship with them, came to their rescue. Had the negotiations succeeded and the Congress-League government been placed in power, this observation would perhaps have not at all been made. It is indeed possible that the fears of Mr. Jinnah may have been genuine. But one cannot argue about fears that have no basis, remote or near, in form or substance. One can only treat them. Whatever may be the success or otherwise of the Congress way of treating these fears, the British way can only have one of two consequences, disruption of India or her continued bondage.

DECLARATION OF SLAVERY

The character of the war-government proposed in the British draft was of colonial subservience. This was largely due to the basic need of the British State to retain its empire in India, which had to express itself almost unhindered in the immediate arrangements but which could suffer idealist coverings in the visions of the future. There were other background reasons. The British government could not possibly transfer the general direction of war and the control over foreign policy and covenanted services to Indians who might in the midst of the war choose to follow a war-and-peace policy different from its own.

The Congress could not have agreed to serve in the proposed war-government, for the immediate tendencies

operative in a State are infinitely more decisive than the visions of the future. It is these tendencies and not the visions that make the future. If the immediate settlement tended in the direction of colonial subversion, the future was not likely to be very much different. There was perhaps a background reason for the Congress rejection of the British draft. The Working Committee feared the attitude of the Indian people and its symbolisation in their Patriarch, Mahatma Gandhi. This fear helped the Committee not to surrender the basic need of the Indian State that is to be.

Sir Stafford said in his first press conference that the British proposals did not represent a radical change of policy; they were 'the natural and logical outcome of what has gone before. All statesmen make such cliché' observations, but, in this case, it was nothing but the truth. The immediate settlement was entirely past-dominated. The Viceroy loomed almost as large as before. The Commander-in-Chief was unreduced in his august size. What if the British draft was a declaration of independence in the future to an indeterminate India, it was a declaration of almost unabated slavery in the immediate present and that is what matters.

DRAMA OF STATE ACTION

The British draft and its background and sequel have unrolled a fascinating drama of the interplay of trends in state-action and the intentions of statesmen. Viewed at from the angle of its British background, the draft represented an apparent but comparatively empty victory of the appeasement policy over the domination policy of an Imperial state, the victory of

Cripps over Churchill. Regarded from the viewpoint of its Indian reception, it revealed the irremovable antagonism between a decaying empire-state and an awakened subject-people, the successful assertiveness of Nehru against Amery. In its facet of armed quantities owned by the British state and their comparative strength in the world, the draft made a partial admission of the inferiority of the navy to land and air forces, the courtsey of Chur-fford to Chiang-Roosevelt and Azad-Nehru. From the angle of past-dominated devices of rule and the basic need of an empire-state, it showed the British insistence on the retention of India, the victory of Amery over Nehru and Azad. In the light of the threats and dangers over India's frontiers, the draft and negotiations were indicative of the remoteness of invasion and its yet weakly-felt pressure, the confidence of Wavell and Linlithgow against Hitler and Tojo, who were not near enough in full strength. Looked at from the profile of sequel, they showed unmistakably the inevitable two-facedness of an imperial statesman the appeaser Cripps turning sharply into the divider and repressor Sir Stafford. The British draft and the ensuing Congress action are showing, in what is perhaps the deciding scene of the drama, the basic needs of two States, the British empire that is and the Indian State that is to be, in mortal combat, the duel between Churchill and Gandhi. No one can say how soon the duel will end, but its outcome is certain. There is to be no further "post-dated cheque on a bank that is obviously crashing." A new effort may be attempted by the British State under one pressure or another and a part-settlement in cash and a deferred promise on an uncertain

bank may still be made. If his countrymen do not pull Mahatma Gandhi away from the combat, he may soon succeed in providing India with a full cash settlement.

APPENDIX I

DRAFT DECLARATION

His Majesty's Government having considered the anxieties expressed in this country and in India as to the fulfilment of promises made in regard to the future of India, have decided to lay down in precise and clear terms the steps which they propose shall be taken for the earliest possible realization of self-government in India. The object is the creation of a new Indian Union which shall constitute a Dominion associated with the United Kingdom and other Dominions by a common allegiance to the Crown but equal to them in every respect, in no way subordinate in any aspect of its domestic and external affairs.

His Majesty's Govt. therefore make the following declaration :

(a) Immediately upon cessation of hostilities, steps shall be taken to set up in India in manner described hereafter an elected body charged with the task of framing a new Constitution for India.

(b) Provision shall be made, as set out below, for participation of Indian States in the constitution-making body.

(c) His Majesty's Government undertake to accept and implement forthwith the constitution so framed subject only to (i) The right of any province of British India that is not prepared to accept the new constitution to retain its present constitutional position. pro-

vision being made for its subsequent accession if it so decides.

With such non-acceding provinces, should they so desire, His Majesty's Government will be prepared to agree upon a new constitution giving them the same full status as the Indian Union and arrived at by a procedure analogous to that here laid down.

(ii) The signing of a treaty which shall be negotiated between His Majesty's Government and the constitution-making body. This treaty will cover all necessary matters arising out of the complete transfer of responsibility from British to Indian hands; it will make provision, in accordance with undertakings given by His Majesty's Government for the protection of racial and religious minorities; but will not impose any restriction on the power of the Indian Union to decide in future its relationship to other member States of the British Commonwealth.

Whether or not an Indian State elects to adhere to the constitution it will be necessary to negotiate a revision of its treaty arrangements so far as this may be required in the new situation.

(d) The constitution-making body shall be composed as follows unless the leaders of Indian opinion in the principal communities agree upon some other form before the end of hostilities.

Immediately upon the result being known of provincial elections which will be necessary at the end of hostilities, the entire membership of the Lower Houses of Provincial legislatures shall as a single electoral college proceed to the election of the constitution-mak-

ing body by the system of proportional representation. This new body shall be in number about 1/10th of the number of the electoral college.

Indian States shall be invited to appoint representatives in the same proportion as to their total population as in the case of representatives of British India as a whole and with the same powers as British Indian members. .

(e) During the critical period which now faces India and until the new constitution can be framed His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the responsibility for and retain the control and direction of the Defence of India as part of their world war effort but the task of organising to the full the military, moral and material resources of India must be the responsibility of the Government of India with the cooperation of the peoples of India. His Majesty's Government desire and invite the immediate and effective participation of the leaders of the principal sections of the Indian people in the counsels of their country, of the Commonwealth and of the United Nations. Thus they will be enabled to give their active and constructive help in the discharge of a task which is vital and essential for the future freedom of India.

March 29. 1942.

APPENDIX II

RESOLUTION OF THE WORKING COMMITTEE

The Working Committee have given their full and earnest consideration to the proposals made by the British War Cabinet in regard to India and the elucidation thereof by Sir Stafford Cripps. These proposals, which have been made at the very last hour because of the compulsion of events, have to be considered not only in relation to India's demand for independence, but more especially in the present grave war crisis, with a view to meeting effectively the perils and dangers that confront India and envelop the world.

The Congress has repeatedly stated, ever since the commencement of the War in September 1939, that the people of India would line themselves with the progressive forces of the world and assume full responsibility to face the new problems and shoulder the new burdens that had arisen, and it asked for the necessary conditions to enable them to do so to be created. An essential condition was the freedom of India, for only the realisation of present freedom could light the flame which would illumine millions of hearts and move them to action. At the last meeting of the All India Congress Committee, after the commencement of the War in the Pacific, it was stated that: 'Only a free and independent India can be in a position to undertake the defence of the country on a national basis and be of help in the furtherance of the larger causes that are emerging from the storm of war.'

The British War Cabinet's new proposals relate principally to the future upon the cessation of hostilities. The Committee, while recognising that self-determination for the people of India is accepted in principle in that uncertain future, regret that this is fettered and circumscribed and certain provisions have been introduced which gravely imperil the development of a free and united nation and the establishment of a democratic State. Even the constitution-making body is so constituted that the people's right to self-determination is vitiated by the introduction of non-representative elements. The people of India have as a whole clearly demanded full independence and the Congress has repeatedly declared that no other status except that of independence for the whole of India could be agreed to or could meet the essential requirements of the present situation. The Committee recognise that future independence may be implicit in the proposals but the accompanying provisions and restrictions are such that real freedom may well become an illusion. The complete ignoring of the ninety millions of the people of the Indian States and their treatment as commodities at the disposal of their rulers is a negation of both democracy and self-determination. While the representation of an Indian State in the constitution-making body is fixed on a population basis, the people of the State have no voice in choosing those representatives, nor are they to be consulted at any stage, while decisions vitally affecting them are being taken. Such States may in many ways become barriers to the growth of Indian freedom, enclaves where foreign authority still prevails and where the possibility of maintaining foreign armed forces has

been stated to be a likely contingency, and a perpetual menace to the freedom of the people of the States as well as of the rest of India

The acceptance before hand of the novel principle of non-accession for a province is also a severe blow to the conception of Indian unity and an apple of discord likely to generate growing trouble in the provinces, and which may well lead to further difficulties in the way of the Indian States merging themselves in the Indian Union. The Congress has been wedded to Indian freedom and unity and any break in that unity, especially in the modern world when people's minds inevitably think in terms of ever larger federations, would be injurious to all concerned and exceedingly painful to contemplate. Nevertheless the Committee cannot think in terms of compelling the people in any territorial unit to remain in an Indian Union against their declared and established will. While recognising this principle, the Committee feel that every effort should be made to create conditions which would help the different units in developing a common and co-operative national life. The acceptance of the principle inevitably involves that no changes should be made which result in fresh problems being created and compulsion being exercised on other substantial groups within that area. Each territorial unit should have the fullest possible autonomy within the Union, consistently with a strong national State. The proposal now made on the part of the British War Cabinet encourages and will lead to attempts at separation at the very inception of a union and thus create friction just when the utmost cooperation and goodwill are most needed. This proposal has been presumably made to

meet a communal demand, but it will have other consequences also and lead politically reactionary and obscurantist groups among different communities to create trouble and divert public attention from the vital issues before the country.

Any proposal concerning the future of India must demand attention and scrutiny, but in today's grave crisis, it is the present that counts, and even proposals for the future are important in so far as they affect the present. The Committee have necessarily attached the greatest importance to this aspect of the question, and on this ultimately depends what advice they should give to those who look to them for guidance. For this present the British War Cabinet's proposals are vague and altogether incomplete, and it would appear that no vital changes in the present structure are contemplated. It has been made clear that the Defence of India will in any event remain under British control. At any time defence is a vital subject; during war time it is all important and covers almost every sphere of life and administration. To take away defence from the sphere of responsibility at this stage is to reduce that responsibility to a farce and a nullity, and to make it perfectly clear that India is not going to be free in any way and her Government is not going to function as a free and independent government during the pendency of the War. The Committee would repeat that an essential and fundamental prerequisite for the assumption of responsibility by the Indian people in the present, is their realisation as a fact that they are free and are in charge of maintaining and defending their freedom. What is most wanted is the enthusiastic response of the people which cannot be

evoked without the fullest trust in them and the devolution of responsibility on them in the matter of defence. It is only thus that even at this grave eleventh hour it may be possible to galvanise the people of India to rise to the height of the occasion. It is manifest that the present Government of India, as well as its provincial agencies, are lacking in competence, and are incapable of shouldering the burden of India's defence. It is only the people of India, through their popular representatives, who may shoulder this burden worthily. But that can only be done by present freedom, and full responsibility being cast upon them.

The Committee, therefore, are unable to accept the proposals put forward on behalf of the British War Cabinet.

April 10, 1942 (communicated to Sir Stafford on April 2nd.)

APPENDIX III

SIR STAFFORD'S DEFENCE FORMULA

(a) The Commander-in-Chief should retain a seat in the Viceroy's Executive Council as "War Member" and should retain his full control over all the war activities of the armed forces in India subject to the control of His Majesty's Government and the War Cabinet upon which body a representative Indian should sit with equal powers in all matters relating to the Defence of India. Membership of the Pacific Council would likewise be offered to a representative Indian.

(b) An Indian representative member would be added to the Viceroy's Executive, who would take over those sections of the Department of Defence which can organisationally be separated immediately from the Commander-in-Chief's War Department and which are specified under head (i) of the annexure. In addition this member would take over the Defence Co-ordination Department which is at present directly under the Viceroy, and certain other important functions of the Government of India which are directly related to Defence and which do not fall under any of the other existing departments and which are specified under head (ii) of the annexure.

His Majesty's Government very much hope, as I personally hope, that this arrangement will enable the Congress to come into the scheme so that if other

important bodies of Indian opinion are also willing it will be possible for His Excellency the Viceroy to embark forthwith upon the task of forming the new National Government in consultation with the leaders of the Indian opinion.

ANNEXURE I

I. Matters now dealt with in the Defence Department which would be transferred to a defence Co-ordination Department.

- (a) Public relations.
- (b) Demobilization and post-War reconstruction.
- (c) Petroleum Officer, whose functions are to calculate the requirements of, and make provision for, all the petroleum products required for the Army, Navy and Air Force, and for the Civil Departments including Storage and distribution.
- (d) Indian representation on the Eastern Group Supply Council.
- (e) Amenities for, and welfare, of troops and their dependants, including Indian soldiers abroad.
- (f) All canteen organisations.
- (g) Certain non-technical educational institutions e.g., Lawrence schools, K. G. R. I. M. Schools and the Prince of Wales' Royal Indian Military College.
- (h) Stationery, Printing and forms for the Army.

- (i) Reception, accommodation and social arrangements for all foreign missions, representatives and officers.

II. In addition the Defence Co-ordination Department would take over many major questions bearing directly on defence, but difficult to locate in any particular existing departments. Examples are

“Denial” policy.

Policy of evacuation from threatened areas.

Signals co-ordination.

Economic warfare.

The War Department, for which the Commander-in-Chief will be Member, will be responsible for the governmental relations of G.H.Q., N.H.Q. and A.H.Q. which include:—

(1) Examining and sanctioning all proposals emanating from G.H.Q. and A.H.Q.

(2) Representing the policy of Government on all questions connected with the war which originate in or concern G.H.Q., N.H.Q. or A.H.Q.

(3) Acting as the channel of communication between the Government of India and H.M.G. on all such questions.

(4) Acting as liaison between these headquarters and the other Departments of Government, and Provincial Governments.

APPENDIX IV

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN MAULANA AZAD AND SIR STAFFORD CRIPPS

Birla Park
New Delhi, April 10, 1942.

Dear Sir Stafford,

On the 2nd April I sent you the resolution of the Working Committee of the Congress containing their views on the tentative proposals put forward by you on behalf of the British Government. In this resolution we expressed our dissent from several important and far-reaching proposals for the future. Further consideration of these proposals has only strengthened us in our conviction in regard to them, and we should like to repeat that we cannot accept them as suggested. The Working Committee's resolution gives expression to our conclusions relating to them which we reached after the most earnest consideration.

That resolution, however, emphasized the gravity of the present situation and stated that the ultimate decision that we might take would be governed by the changes made in the present. The over-riding problem before all of us, and more especially before all Indians, is the defence of the country from aggression and invasion. The future, important as it is, will depend on what happens in the next few months and years. We were therefore prepared to do without any assurances for this uncertain future, hoping that through our sacrifices in the defence of

our country we would lay the solid and enduring foundations for a free and independent India. We concentrated, therefore, on the present.

Your original proposals in regard to the present, as contained in clause (e) of the proposed declaration, were vague and incomplete, except in so far as it was made clear that "His Majesty's Government must inevitably bear the full responsibility for the defence of India." These proposals, in effect, asked for participation in the tasks of to-day with a view to ensure "the future freedom of India." Freedom was for an uncertain future, not for the present; and no indication was given in clause (e) of what arrangements or governmental and other changes would be made in the present. When this vagueness was pointed out, you said that this was deliberate so as to give you freedom to determine these changes in consultation with others. In our talks you gave us to understand that you envisaged a National Government which would deal with all matters except Defence.

Defence at any time, and more particularly in war time, is of essential importance and without it a National Government functions in a very limited field. Apart from this consideration, it was obvious that the whole purpose of your proposals and our talks centred round the urgency of the problems created by the threat of the invasion of India. The chief functions of a National Government must necessarily be to organize Defence both intensively and on the widest popular basis and to create a mass psycho-

logy of resistance to an invader. Only a National Government could do that, and only a government on whom this responsibility was laid. Popular resistance must have a national background, and both the soldier and the civilian must feel that they are fighting for their country's freedom under national leadership.

We pointed this out to you. The question became one not of just satisfying our national aspirations but of effective prosecution of the war and fighting to the last any invader who set foot on the soil of India. On general principles a National Government would control defence through a Defence Minister, and the Commander-in-Chief would control the armed forces and would have full latitude in the carrying out of operations connected with the war. An Indian National Government should have normally functioned in this way. We made it clear that the Commander-in-Chief in India would have control of the armed forces and the conduct of operations and other matters connected therewith. With a view to arriving at a settlement, we were prepared to accept certain limitations on the normal powers of the Defence Minister. We had no desire to upset in the middle of the war the present military organisation or arrangements. We accepted also that the higher strategy of the war should be controlled by the War Cabinet in London which would have an Indian member. The immediate object before us was to make the defence of India more effective, to strengthen it, to broad base it on the popular will, and to reduce all red tape, delay and inefficiency from it. There was no question

of our interfering with the technical and operational sides. One thing, of course, was of paramount importance to us; India's safety and defence. Subject to this primary consideration, there was no reason why there should be any difficulty in finding a way out of the present impasse in accordance with the unanimous desire of the Indian people, for in this matter there are no differences amongst us.

The emphasis on Defence led you to reconsider the matter and you wrote to me on the 7th April suggesting a formula for Defence.

In this letter you said: "As the Working Committee have understood, it is impossible to make any change in the existing constitution during the period of hostilities." The Working Committee's attitude in the matter has been completely misunderstood and I should like to clear this up, although we are not immediately concerned with it. The Committee do not think that there is any inherent difficulty in the way of constitutional changes during the war. Everything that helps in the war not only can be but must be done, and done with speed. That is the only way to carry on and win a war. No complicated enactments are necessary. A recognition of India's freedom and right to self-determination could easily be made, if it were so wished, together with certain other consequential but important changes. The rest can be left to future arrangements and adjustments. I might remind you that the British Prime Minister actually proposed a union of France and England on the eve of the fall of France. No greater or more fundamental change could be imagined, and

this was suggested at a period of grave crisis and peril. War accelerates change; it does not fit in with static conceptions.

The formula for Defence that you sent us was considered by us together with its annexure which gave a list of subjects or departments which were to be transferred to the Defence Department. This list was a revealing one as it proved that the Defence Minister would deal with relatively unimportant matters. We were unable to accept this and we informed you accordingly.

Subsequently, a new formula for Defence was suggested to us, but without any list of subjects. This formula seemed to us to be based on a more healthy approach and we suggested certain changes pointing out that our ultimate decision would necessarily depend on the allocation of subjects. A revised formula was then sent back to us together with an indication of the functions of the War Department.

This was so widely and comprehensively framed that it was difficult for us to know what the actual allocation of subjects and departments, as between the Defence Department and the War Department, would be. A request was made on our behalf that illustrative lists of these subjects might be supplied to enable us to consider the matter. No such lists were supplied to us.

In the interview we had with you yesterday we discussed the new formula and expressed our viewpoint in regard to it. I need not repeat what I said then. The wording of the formula is after all a

minor matter and we would not allow that to come in our way, unless some important principle is at stake. But behind that wording lay certain ideas and we were surprised to find that during the past few days we had been proceeding on wrong assumptions.

When we asked you for illustrative lists of subjects for the two departments, you referred us to the old list for the Defence Department which you had previously sent us and which we had been unable to accept. You added that certain residuary subjects might be added to this but, in effect, there was not likely to be any such subject as the allocation was complete. Thus, you said, that substantially there was no change between the old list and any new one that might be prepared. If this was so, and we were to go back ultimately to the place we started from, then what was the purpose of our searching for new formula? A new set of words meaning the same thing made no difference. In the course of our talks many other matters were also cleared up, unfortunately to our disadvantage. You had referred both privately and in the course of public statements to a National Government and a "Cabinet" consisting of "ministers." These words have a certain significance and we had imagined that the new Government would function with full powers as a Cabinet, with the Viceroy acting as a constitutional head. But the new picture that you placed before us was really not very different from the old, the difference being one of degree and not of kind. The new Government could neither be called except vaguely and inaccu-

rately, nor could it function as a National Government. It would just be the Viceroy and his executive council with the Viceroy having all his old powers. We did not ask for any legal changes but we did ask for definite assurances and conventions which would indicate that the new Government would function as a free government the members of which act as members of a cabinet in a constitutional government. In regard to the conduct of the war and connected activities the Commander-in-Chief would have freedom, and he would act as war minister.

We are informed that nothing can be said at this stage, even vaguely and generally, about the conventions that should govern the Government and the Viceroy. Ultimately there was always the possibility of the members of the Executive Council resigning or threatening to resign if they disagreed with the Viceroy. That sanction or remedy is of course always open, but it is curious that we should base our approach to a new government on the probability of conflict and resignation at the very outset.

The picture, therefore, placed before us is not essentially different from the old one. The whole object which we, and I believe have in view—that is, to create a new psychological approach to the people, to make them feel that their own national government had come, that they were defending their newly won freedom—would be completely frustrated when they saw this old picture again, with even the old labels on. The continuation of the India Office which has been a symbol of evil to us, would confirm this picture. It has almost been taken for granted for

sometime past that the India Office would soon disappear as it was an anachronism. But now we are told that even this undesirable relic of a past age is going to continue.

The picture of the government, which was so like the old in all essential features, is such that we cannot fit into it. Normally we would have had little difficulty in disposing of this matter for it is so far removed from all that we have striven for, but in the circumstances of today we were prepared to give full consideration to every proposal which might lead to an effective organisation of the defence of India. The peril that faces India affects us more than it can possibly affect any foreigner, and we are anxious and eager to do our utmost to face it and overcome it. But we cannot undertake responsibilities when we are not given the freedom and power to shoulder them effectively and when an old environment continues which hampers the national effort.

While we cannot accept the proposals you have made, we want to inform you that we are yet prepared to assume responsibility provided a truly national government is formed. We are prepared to put aside for the present all questions about the future, though as we have indicated, we hold definite views about it. But in the present, the National Government must be a cabinet government with full power and must not merely be a continuation of the Viceroy's Executive Council. In regard to defence we have already stated what, in our opinion, the position should be at present. We feel that such an arrangement is the very minimum that is essential for the

functioning of a National Government and for making the popular appeal which is urgently needed.

We would point out to you that the suggestions we have put forward are not ours only but may be considered to be the unanimous demand of the Indian people. On these matters there is no difference of opinion among various groups and parties, and the difference is as between the Indian people as a whole and the British Government. Such differences as exist in India relate to constitutional changes in the future. We are agreeable to the postponement of this issue so that the largest possible measure of unity might be achieved in the present crisis for the defence of India. It would be a tragedy that even when there is this unanimity of opinion in India, the British Government should prevent a free National Government from functioning and from serving the cause of India as well as the larger causes for which millions are suffering and dying today.

Yours sincerely,

(Sd.) ABUL KALAM AZAD

The Rt. Hon. Sir Stafford Cripps
3, Queen Victoria Road
New Delhi

3, Queen Victoria Road
New Delhi, the 11th April, 1942

My Dear Maulana Sahib,

I was extremely sorry to receive from you your letter of April 10th expressing the rejection by the Congress Working Committee of His Majesty's Government's draft declaration:

I will not deal with those points which are covered by the original resolution of your Committee which you sent me, as they were clearly not the reason for your decision.

Nor need I go into the question of the division of duties between the Defence Minister and the Commander-in-Chief as War Member with which you deal at length. This division allotted to the Defence Minister all functions outside those actually connected with the General Headquarters, Navy Headquarters and Air Headquarters which are under the Commander-in-Chief as head of the fighting forces in India.

Nothing further could have been done by way of giving responsibility for Defence services to representative Indian members without jeopardising the immediate defence of India under the Commander-in-Chief. This defence is, as you know, a paramount duty and responsibility of His Majesty's Government, while unity of Command is essential in the interests of the Allied help to India.

The real substance of your refusal to take part in a National Government is that the form of Government suggested is not such as would enable you to rally the Indian people as you desire.

You make two suggestions. First that the constitution might now be changed. In this respect I would point out that you made this suggestion for the first time last night, nearly three weeks after you had received the proposals, and I would further remark that every other represent⁺ whom

I have discussed this view has accepted the practical impossibility of any such legislative change in the middle of a war at such a moment as the present.

Second you suggest "a truly National Government" be formed, which must be a "cabinet Government with full power."

Without constitutional changes of a most complicated character and on a very large scale this would not be possible, as you realise.

Were such a system to be introduced by convention under the existing circumstances, the nominated cabinet (nominated presumably by the major political organisations) would be responsible to no one but itself, could not be removed and would in fact constitute an absolute dictatorship of the majority.

This suggestion would be rejected by all minorities in India, since it would subject all of them to a permanent and autocratic majority in the Cabinet. Nor would it be consistent with the pledges already given by His Majesty's Government to protect the rights of those minorities.

In a country such as India where communal divisions are still so deep an irresponsible majority Government of this kind is not possible.

Apart from this, however, until such time as the Indian peoples frame their new constitution, His Majesty's Government must continue to carry out its duties to those large sections of the Indian people to whom it has given its pledges.

The proposals of His Majesty's Government went as far as possible short of a complete change in the constitution which is generally acknowledged as impracticable in the circumstances of to-day.

While therefore both I and His Majesty's Government recognise the keen desire of your Working Committee to carry on the war against the enemy by every means in their power, they regret that your Working Committee has not seen its way to join in the war effort upon the conditions sincerely offered, the only conditions which could have brought together all the different communities and sections of the Indian people.

Yours sincerely,

(Sd.) STAFFORD CRIPPS.

I propose to publish this answer.

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad

Birla House

New Delhi

Birla House
Albuquerque Road
New Delhi
April 11, 1942

Dear Sir Stafford,

I have just received your letter of April 10th and I must confess that my colleagues and I were considerably surprised to read it. I am sending you this reply immediately and can only deal briefly here with some of the points you have raised.

The points covered by your original resolution are important and represent my Committee's well-considered views on the British proposals as a whole. But we pointed out to you that so far as the proposals relate to the future they might be set aside, as we were anxious to assume responsibility for India's government and defence in this hour of danger. This responsibility could only be undertaken, however, if it was real responsibility and power.

No one has suggested any restrictions on the normal powers of the Commander-in-Chief. Indeed we went beyond this and were prepared to agree to further powers being given to him as War Minister. But it is clear that the British Government's conception and ours in regard to defence differ greatly. For us it means giving it a national character and calling upon every man and woman in India to participate in it. It means trusting our own people and seeking their full co-operation in this great effort. The British Government's view seems to be based on an utter lack of confidence in the Indian people and in withholding real power from them. You refer to the paramount duty and responsibility of His Majesty's Government in regard to defence. That duty and responsibility cannot be discharged effectively unless the Indian people are made to have and feel their responsibility, and the recent past stands witness to this. The Government of India do not seem to realise that the war can only be fought on a popular basis.

Your statement that we have for the first time after three weeks suggested a change in the consti-

tution is hardly correct. In the course of our talks reference was made to it, but it is true that we did not lay stress on it as we did not want to introduce new issues. But when you stated explicitly in your letter that we had agreed that no constitutional changes could be made during the war, we had to deny this and correct your impression.

It is the last part of your letter that has especially surprised and pained us. It seems that there has been a progressive deterioration in the British Government's attitude as our negotiations proceeded. What we were told in our very first talk with you is now denied or explained away. You told me then that there would be a National Government which would function as a Cabinet and that the position of the Viceroy would be analogous to that of the King in England vis-a-vis his Cabinet. In regard to the India Office, you told me, that you were surprised that no one had so far mentioned this important matter, and that the practical course was to have this attached or incorporated with the Dominions' Office.

The whole of this picture which you sketched before us has now been completely shattered by what you told us during our last interview.

You have put forward an argument in your letter which at no time during our talks was mentioned by you. You refer to the 'absolute dictatorship of the majority.' It is astonishing that such a statement should be made in this connection and at this stage. This difficulty is inherent in any scheme of a mixed cabinet formed to meet an emergency, but there are

many ways in which it can be provided for. Had you raised this question we would have discussed it and found a satisfactory solution. The whole approach to this question has been that a mixed cabinet should be formed and should co-operate together. We accepted this. We are not interested in the Congress as such gaining power, but we are interested in the Indian people as a whole having freedom and power. How the cabinet should be formed and should function was a question which might have been considered after the main question was decided; that is the extent of power which the British Government would give up to the Indian people. Because of this we never discussed it with you or even referred to it. Nevertheless you have raised this matter for the first time, in what is presumably your last letter to us, and tried most unjustifiably to sidetrack the real issue between us.

You will remember that in my very first talk with you, I pointed out that the communal or like questions did not arise at this stage. As soon as the British Government made up its mind to transfer real power and responsibility, the other questions could be tackled successfully by those concerned. You gave me the impression that you agreed with this approach.

We are convinced that if the British Government did not pursue a policy of encouraging disruption, all of us, to whatever party or group we belonged, would be able to come together and find a common line of action. But, unhappily, even in this grave hour of peril, the British Government is unable to

give up its wrecking policy. We are driven to the conclusion that it attaches more importance to holding on to its rule in India, as long as it can, and promoting discord and disruption here with that end in view, than to an effective defence of India against the aggression and invasion that overhang us. To us, and to all Indians, the dominant consideration is the defence and safety of India, and it is by that test that we judge.

You mention that you propose to publish your letter to me. I presume that you have no objection now to our publishing our original resolution, your letters to us, and our letters to you.

Yours sincerely,
(Sd.) ABUL KALAM AZAD

APPENDIX V

SIR STAFFORD'S BROADCAST TO AMERICA

Broadcasting to America over the Columbia Broadcasting System, Sir Stafford Cripps, Lord Privy Seal, and Leader of the House of Commons said: "I have always been a firm friend of India and I have done my best in the past to work for the freedom of India.

"When I joined the British War Cabinet and put forward a proposal for India's self-government I volunteered to travel 20,000 miles to India and back to put the case directly to Indian political leaders on behalf of the British Government and people. We offered the Indian people, complete liberty, the moment the war was over, to devise and set up their own form of Government. We suggested the broad, outlines of how they should proceed, but there was no rigidity in these suggestions. It was left open to the various religions and races to agree upon some other method.

"But to my regret they neither accepted it nor put forward any agreed alternative.

"It was not this future arrangement, however, but the immediate situation which caused the Congress Party in India to reject the proposals.

"We offered representative Indian political leaders immediate office in the Viceroy's Executive

Council—a body of ministers like those who advise your President.

“Mr. Gandhi has demanded that we should walk out of India, leaving the country with its deep-rooted religious division without any constitutional form of Government and with no organized administration. No responsible Government could take such a step—least of all in the midst of war.

“The Muslims, of whom there are at least 80,000,000 are deeply opposed to Hindu domination as are also tens of millions of Depressed Classes. To have agreed to the Congress Party's or to Mr. Gandhi's demands would have meant inevitable chaos and disorder. This is not merely my assertion, it is stated by Mr. Gandhi himself.

“Quite recently he said: ‘Anarchy is the only way.’ India is now an essential part of the world front against the Axis powers. There are British, American and Chinese forces as well as Indians fighting side by side to defend India against Japan and if the obligations of the British Government to their American and Chinese Allies are to be observed, we must ensure that India remains a safe base in and from which to operate against the Japanese enemy, and we cannot allow conditions to be created by any political party or leader in India which will jeopardise the safety of the United Nations' armies and air forces or help the advance of our enemies to this new dangerous theatre of war.

“This is an obligation not only to the British and American forces in India, it is an obligation to the

Indian peoples themselves. That is why your country and our country find themselves both intimately concerned with the condition of India at this moment.

"Your sons as well as our sons are helping to defend India and wage war against the Japanese. Your policy as well as our policy is to defend India, but Mr. Gandhi and the Congress Party have other views.

"Mr. Gandhi I have always regarded with respect as a great nationalist and religious leader, but I am bound to say that in the present circumstances he is not showing himself to be practical and realistic. Certainly the action which he is now threatening—mass civil disobedience by his followers—is calculated to endanger both your war effort and our own and bring the greatest aid and comfort to our common enemies. Mr. Gandhi's views are not always easily defined or always consistent, but let me read a few of his recent statements:—

"We do not want these Allied troops for our defence or protection. If luck favours us the Japanese may see no reason to hold the country after the Allies have withdrawn. China, perhaps, would hardly appreciate this. Again Mr. Gandhi said: 'American aid amounts in the end to American influence, if not American rule added to the British. If the British left India to her fate.....probably the Japanese would leave India alone'. These are solemn words and what do all of them amount to?

"Mr. Gandhi is not prepared to wait. He would rather jeopardise freedom and the whole cause of the

United Nations. He threatens the extremes of pressure in this most difficult hour to win political power for his own party. There is not the slightest doubt that other large and powerful political parties are opposed to Mr. Gandhi's demands.

"I regret profoundly that he has taken this attitude and I know that the Indian people as a whole do not support it.

"He may gain a measure of support for mass disobedience but for the sake of India as well as for the cause of the United Nations it will be our duty to insist on keeping India as a safe and orderly base for our joint operations against the Japanese. Whatever steps are necessary to that end we must take fearlessly.

"Once victory is gained, India has been offered complete freedom to provide in whatever way she chooses for her own self-government. But that victory must first be gained. We cannot allow the actions of a visionary, however distinguished in his fight for freedom in the past, to thwart the United Nations' drive for victory in the East. The issues are too grave for the whole world. American, Chinese, Indian and British soldiers must not be sacrificed in their gallant struggle for the liberty of the world by a political party manoeuvring in India or in any other country. It is the interests of India that are at stake as well as that of China, Britain and the United States. I am sure that we in this country can rely on you to give us your support in doing whatever is necessary to maintain intact the front of the United

Nations in India and reopen the lifeline of our gallant Allies—the Chinese.”

—dated 27th July 1942.

PANDIT NEHRU'S REPLY TO SIR CRIPPS

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, in a statement to the Press on the reaction to the Congress Working Committee's resolution, says:

“Sir Stafford Cripps' recent broadcast to America has compelled me to say a few words. This broadcast is so full of misrepresentations of the Congress attitude that I am amazed at it. Like a clever lawyer Sir Stafford has picked out phrases from Mr. Gandhi's statements without reference to their context and tried to prove the British imperialist case. This is no time for a lawyer's quibbling, and no statesman who shoulders responsibility can afford to do this. If there is one consideration which has been paramount before the Congress leaders it is that of the defence of India.

“Sir Stafford talks lightly of anarchy and chaos. The right way to prevent their development is for British rule to cease to be and for a provisional government of free India representing the major groups and parties in the country to take its place. The right way to do this is for Great Britain not to talk to us in offensive and patronising language, but to approach us in all humility with repentance for all the evils she has done to India and is still doing to her.

“Sir Stafford Cripps talks about war and about danger to India. We are more concerned with that danger than he can be, for we shall suffer most by it.

If war comes to India it will be the people of India who will fight and die in defence of their land and their homes. It will be the people of India also, when they are in a position to do so, who will pour out their help to China and the right cause.

"The situation between England and India is bad enough in all conscience. And yet Sir Stafford Cripps must needs go out of his way to make it far worse and must constitute himself the champion of the Muslims and the Depressed Classes and others. I know my Muslim countrymen a little better than Sir Stafford Cripps does and I know that what he says about them is a calumny, for vast numbers of them are devoted to the cause of India's independence.

Sir Stafford has also, on various occasions, brought out non-violence as an insuperable barrier to prevent freedom in India. If there has been anything clearly and definitely stated on our behalf it is this : that free India will defend the country in every way, through armed forces and by all means.

"It is sad beyond measure that a man like Sir Stafford Cripps should allow himself to become the Devil's advocate. He has thus injured Indo-British relations more than any other Englishman could have done."

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